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ABSTRACT

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) works with 10 American-affiliated Pacific entities: (1) American Samoa; (2) the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands; (3) the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Yap); (4) Guam; (5) Hawaii; (6) the Republic of the Marshall Islands; and (7) the Republic of Palau. This survey raises awareness of the risk factors affecting educators in the Pacific entities served by PREL. These risk factors might also play a role in teachers' and school administrators' absenteeism, attrition and stress burnout. In Chuuk State, 124 teacher surveys and 38 administrator surveys were returned. The data reveal the extent of these problems and shed some light on possible contributing factors. Absenteeism among teachers and school administrators appears to be a problem. Lack of support and low salaries were top reasons selected for leaving teaching, with many of the teachers who might leave teaching experiencing some aspects of occupational burnout. Appendixes contain teacher and administrator questionnaires (Contains 17 references.) (DFR)

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RETENTION AND ATTRITION OF PACIFIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS (RAPSTA) STUDY

Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia

Research and Development Cadre

June 1998

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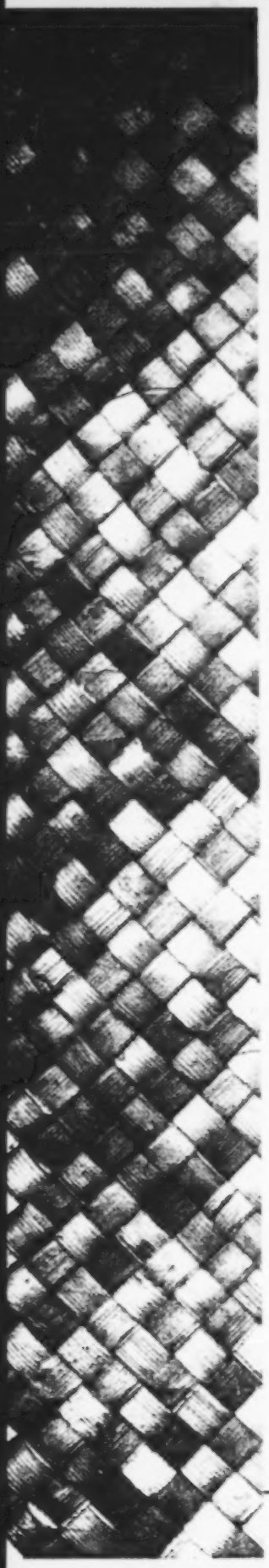

Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators (RAPSTA) Study

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Preface

This study represents one step towards solving problems that plague many schools throughout the Pacific: high rates of absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators. The data collected in this study reveal the extent of these problems and shed some light on possible contributing factors.

During coming months, R&D Cadre members will present this report to teachers and school administrators in each Pacific entity, soliciting feedback and suggestions that we anticipate will lead to the formulation of specific, entity-based solutions to these concerns.

I. Introduction

The mission of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) is to *assist education, government, community agencies, businesses, and labor groups to maintain cultural literacy and improve the quality of life by helping to strengthen educational programs and processes for children, youth, and adults* (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 1996).

In order to carry out this mission, PREL has made a commitment to work in close partnership with the ten American-affiliated Pacific entities: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Yap), Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. As a result of their very different forms of political affiliation with the United States, these ten states are referred to as *entities* in PREL's terminology.

As part of this work, PREL's Research and Development (R&D) Cadre has undertaken several studies in order to describe the educational experiences and opportunities of Pacific Islanders. The R&D Cadre is a group of Pacific educators consisting of one member from each department or ministry of education in the ten entities comprising PREL's service region, and one member representing the National Department of Education, Federated States of Micronesia.

Each entity has formed a local support team of researchers who assist the cadre member in carrying out research studies. The local R&D support teams range in size from five to thirteen members.

One of the studies conducted, *A Study of Risk Factors Among High School Students in the Pacific Region* (Pacific Region Educational Laboratory R&D Cadre, 1995), sparked interest in examining risk factors associated with adults working in Pacific schools. Open-ended questions answered by students participating in the 1995 study indicated that these students were concerned about teacher absenteeism. In entities where no substitute teacher pool is available, students' educational opportunities may be seriously compromised due to high rates of teacher absenteeism.

Frequent teacher absenteeism in the Pacific may have a strong impact on student achievement. For various reasons, such as lack of funds or human resources, substitute-teacher programs are lacking in many entities. Students might come to school, but a teacher might not be available to teach them. Not only does this affect access to educational opportunities and contribute to low student achievement, it could also have an effect on attendance counts, which can adversely affect school funding, thus perpetuating a negative cycle.

Factors related to teacher and school administrator absenteeism have been identified in the research literature. However, research on this topic is lacking for the Pacific region. As a result, the PREL Board of Directors recommended follow-up research detailing risk factors for teachers and school administrators. This recommendation was supported by the R&D Cadre members, who expressed interest in examining these risk factors within their respective entities. In addition, policy makers and program managers in the ten entities have expressed concern about the impact of teacher and administrator absenteeism, as well as attrition and stress/burnout, on student achievement.

In response to these concerns, a study was designed to describe the factors that affect Pacific Island educators and make them "at risk" for absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1997) defines stress as "a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily and mental tension." Research indicates that excessive stress might cause illness.

A condition termed "burnout" (DeRobbio, 1995) could also result from difficult and stressful work conditions. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines this condition as "exhaustion of physical or emotional strength."

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1) What are the risk factors that affect Pacific school teachers and administrators?

2) What risk factors lead to absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout?

Of particular interest to the Chuuk Department of Education is the possible relationship between students' academic achievement and the absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout rates among teachers and school administrators. Student achievement in Chuuk State has been steadily declining over the years. This decline is evident in high-school graduates' poor performance on the annual College of Micronesia-Federated States of Micronesia entrance test and in the low Grade 8 scores on the Chuuk State Department of Education Junior High Entrance Test. These test results have potentially negative implications for teachers and school administrators in Chuuk State. For this reason, Chuuk State was interested in participating in the study.

This study was designed to identify risk factors affecting educators in Chuuk State and other Pacific entities served by PREL. As part of the process, a literature review of teacher risk factors was performed and published (Hammond & Onikama, 1997). This review concluded that:

1) Factors associated with teacher absenteeism–such as child care, transportation difficulties, illness, and cultural demands–tend to be immediate obligations or concerns (Scott & Wimbush, 1991).

2) Factors associated with attrition–such as low salaries, poor benefits, and work overload–are chronic or habitual concerns (Wari, 1993).

3) Factors associated with stress/burnout–such as student misbehavior (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Pelletier, 1977; American Psychiatric Association, 1994); anger, anxiety, or depression (DeRobbio & Iwanicki, 1996); and school reform (Farber & Ascher, 1992)–are daily nuisances.

These risk factors might also play a role in teacher and school administrator absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout in the Pacific region with its unique educational, cultural, and geographical contexts. Pacific schools have adopted the American system of education. However, this transplanted system exists parallel to a Pacific orientation and heritage influenced by Polynesian and Micronesian traditional values, cultural events, and environmental circumstances. Some examples include the following, which were taken from a review of the literature and interviews with Pacific educators:

Cultural events. In some island communities, traditional feasts and funerals are important parts of village life. For instance, if a feast falls on a school day, it is likely that the teacher (who may hold a traditional title) will not go to school, but will prepare for the event. Family relationships with their attendant obligations are highly valued and honored among Pacific Islanders and may account for higher absenteeism rates among Pacific educators.

Family and village social roles. In many island communities, family and village relationships provide a social context that may overlook frequent absenteeism. For example, a teacher may be a member of a large and influential family, many of whom may be employed in the public school system. That teacher's absenteeism may, therefore, be overlooked. Although the traditional American ethic views such favoritism as inappropriate, it may be tolerated within the context of many Pacific lifestyles.

Culturally sanctioned time off. Culturally sanctioned time off may be granted to some people in some entities. For example, a condition referred to as "Monday sickness," occurs when male teachers, especially those who are young and single, are absent from school after a weekend of excess. Their absence is tolerated as a social and developmental pattern related to their youth.

Environmental factors. Unique weather patterns such as hurricanes and "super-typhoons" in the Pacific region may have an effect on absenteeism. Typhoon Paka, for example, recently decimated Guam, leaving it without electricity and forcing the closure of schools. In Hawai'i, giant winter swells may close roadways and limit access to schools. Flooding in low-lying islands and atolls can cause many teachers to miss school for one or more days.

The main purpose of this study was to raise awareness of risk factors affecting educators in the Pacific entities and to provide insight necessary to address the concerns of students, policy makers, and educators throughout the region. Hopefully, the results will stimulate interest and follow-up action as it relates to local professional development opportunities for Pacific educators.

Because of the region's remote geographical location and its distance from educator training programs, as well as the high costs associated with traveling to institutions of higher education, local departments of education must share responsibility for the development of programs or interventions geared towards maintaining the educational work force. Preventing the negative outcomes associated with risk factors can help educators to become more effective while working with their students and thus promote positive student outcomes. The study will also contribute to the fund of knowledge on absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among educators generally, and Pacific educators specifically, thereby contributing to cross-cultural theory building. This, in turn, may assist the development of models and tools for promoting retention and reducing attrition and stress/burnout among educators in the Pacific and elsewhere.

II. Methods

The *Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators* (RAPSTA) study was conducted in ten American-affiliated Pacific entities during the spring of 1997. It was designed and conducted by PREL's R&D Cadre and its members' local support teams. PREL staff provided technical assistance.

R&D Cadre members participated in three PREL-sponsored seminars in which they designed the study, developed data collection instruments, and analyzed the data. Cadre members then shared the collected information with their local R&D support teams.

Subjects

The unit of analysis for the RAPSTA study is the elementary and secondary-level teacher and school administrator. In Chuuk State, 170 teacher surveys were distributed, and 124 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a response rate of 73 percent. Fifty-one school administrator surveys were distributed, and 38 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a response rate of 75 percent. Tables 1 and 2 summarize demographic characteristics of the subjects.

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Table 1

Characteristics of RAPSTA Teacher Sample from Chuuk State

Demographic Characteristics		Number	Percentage*
Gender	Female	41	33.1
	Male	74	59.7
	No Response	9	7.3
	TOTAL	**124**	**100.0**
Ethnicity	Caucasian	1	0.8
	Chuukese	119	96.0
	Other	0	0.0
	No Response	4	3.2
	TOTAL	**124**	**100.0**
Age	20-29	6	4.8
	30-39	24	19.4
	40-49	73	58.9
	50+	21	16.9
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**124**	**100.0**
Marital Status	Never Married	2	1.6
	Married	113	91.1
	Separated	2	1.6
	Divorced	0	0.0
	Widowed	4	3.2
	No Response	3	2.4
	TOTAL	**124**	**100.0**
Education	HS Graduate	22	17.7
	Associate Degree	60	48.4
	Bachelor's Degree	28	22.6
	Master's Degree	1	0.8
	Other	4	3.2
	No Response	9	7.3
	TOTAL	**124**	**100.0**
Experience	1 - 4 Years	3	2.4
	5 - 10 Years	17	13.7
	11 - 14 Years	20	16.1
	15 - 20 Years	44	35.5
	20+ Years	32	25.8
	No Response	8	6.5
	TOTAL	**124**	**100.0**
Salary	< 4,000	12	9.7
	4,000 - 4,999	24	19.4
	5,000 - 5,999	44	35.5
	6,000 - 6,999	15	12.1
	7,000 - 7,999	9	7.3
	8,000+	10	8.1
	No Response	10	8.1
	TOTAL	**124**	**100.0**

*Percentages might not sum to exactly 100 due to rounding.

The majority of teachers are married Chuukese males, between the ages of 40 and 49 years, with an associate (48.4%) or bachelor's (22.6%) degree and more than fifteen years of experience.

Table 2

Characteristics of RAPSTA School Administrator Sample from Chuuk State

Demographic Characteristics		Number	Percentage*
Gender	Female	3	7.9
	Male	32	84.2
	No Response	3	7.9
	TOTAL	**38**	**100.0**
Ethnicity	Chuukese	36	94.7
	No Response	2	5.3
	TOTAL	**38**	**100.0**
Age	35-39	3	7.9
	40-44	6	15.8
	45-49	11	29.0
	50-54	9	23.7
	55-59	8	21.1
	No Response	1	2.5
	TOTAL	**38**	**100.0**
Marital Status	Never Married	2	5.3
	Married	35	92.1
	Separated	0	0.0
	Divorced	0	0.0
	Widowed	1	2.6
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**38**	**100.0**
Education	HS Graduate	4	10.5
	Associate Degree	24	63.2
	Bachelor's Degree	10	26.3
	Master's Degree	0	0.0
	Advanced Degree	0	0.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**38**	**100.0**
Experience	1 - 4 Years	2	5.3
	5 - 10 Years	2	5.3
	11 - 14 Years	4	10.5
	15 - 20 Years	8	21.1
	20+ Years	22	57.9
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**38**	**100.0**
Salary	< 4,000	1	2.6
	4,000-4,999	3	7.9
	5,000-5,999	2	5.3
	6,000-6,999	3	7.9
	7,000-7,999	15	39.5
	8,000+	11	28.9
	No Response	3	7.9
	TOTAL	**38**	**100.0**

*Percentages might not sum to exactly 100 due to rounding.

Almost all school administrators are married Chuukese males, between the ages of 45 and 59 years, with an associate (63.2%) or bachelor's (26.3%) degree and more than twenty years of experience.

Sampling

To ensure a high response rate and fairly represent the targeted population, the R&D Cadre decided to survey all teachers and school administrators from representatively sampled schools across the state. This process is referred to as *cluster sampling*. Schools sampled included three from the most populated region, Northern Namoneas; two from Southern Namoneas; two from Mortlock; two from Faichuk; and one from the least populated region, Western Island.

Instrumentation

Two similar data collection instruments were developed, one for teachers and another for school administrators (see Appendices). Each is a five-page survey with three sections: Section 1 consists of 2-1/2 pages of forced-choice and short-answer, self-reported background information as well as absenteeism data for the school year in which the survey was administered. Section 2 is a single-page rating sheet outlining stress/burnout feelings; it was adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey and Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Section 3 is also a single-page rating sheet detailing reasons why an educator might quit teaching or working as a school administrator. Individuals did not identify themselves by name, and all responses were kept confidential.

Section 1 - Demographic Characteristics and Absenteeism Data

Section 1 gathered relevant personal information to be used in examining teacher/school administrator retention and attrition. Questions asked about gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, salary, experience, and current teaching load. Additional data on the number of instructional days away from school during the 1996-1997 school year (SY) and the reasons for those absences were collected. For example, participants were asked to write down the number of days they were away from school in SY 1996-1997 for reasons such as funerals, birthdays, storms, heavy rains, or floods.

Section 2 - Stress and Burnout Ratings

The purpose of Section 2, as a means of measuring employee stress/burnout, was to discover how respondents view their jobs and the people with whom they work closely, as a means of measuring employee stress/burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is recognized as the leading measure of burnout. "It is the best known and most widely used questionnaire for the assessment of individual occupational burnout among human service workers and others whose work involves intense interaction with people" (Offerman, 1986, p. 419). The MBI is a 22-item, self-report inventory of three subscales, which were developed to measure dimensions that the authors felt best defined burnout. These subscales include Low Personal Accomplishment (8 items), Emotional Exhaustion (9 items), and Depersonalization (5 items).

- Low Personal Accomplishment results when teachers evaluate themselves negatively, particularly in relation to their work with students (DeRobbio, 1995). Those who report low personal accomplishment may disagree with the statement, "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in teaching" (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986, p. 2).

- Emotional Exhaustion "is the tired and fatigued feeling that develops as emotional energies are drained. When these feelings become chronic, educators find they can no longer give of themselves to students as they once could" (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 28). They may agree with the statement, "I feel I'm working too hard on my job" (Maslach & Jackson, 1986, p. 2).

- Depersonalization results when educators "no longer have positive feelings about their students" (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 28). They may develop negative or cynical attitudes and feelings about them and may

agree with the statement, "I don't really care what happens to some of my students" (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986, p. 2).

Respondents rated each of the 22 items in terms of the frequency that these feelings occur, ranging from "never" (0) to "every day" (6).

To make the survey instrument more appropriate to the Pacific region, the MBI Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986) and the MBI Human Services Survey (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) were adapted, with permission from the publisher. Seven of the 22 items were modified to clarify vocabulary and idiomatic phrases. Since many of the respondents in the Pacific entities speak English as a second or foreign language, words such as "exhilarated" and "callous," or expressions such as "at the end of my rope" were stated in more understandable terms. These modifications were made by two Pacific-entity educators who are familiar with the English proficiency of teachers in the region. It was determined that these language-clarifying changes would not significantly alter the instrument's technical qualities. The MBI has been validated for use in countries around the world in a number of translations (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 1).

Section 3 - Reasons for Leaving the Profession

The purpose of Section 3 was to understand why teachers and school administrators leave their jobs. Respondents were asked to rate each of 19 statements on a four-point Likert-type scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." For example, teachers rated their level of agreement with two statements: "I might leave my current teaching job for a better teaching position within the next two years" and "I might leave teaching altogether within the next two years." They were also asked to rate their agreement by noting reasons why they might quit teaching. Reasons for leaving the profession, as listed on the survey, were selected because of their prevalence in attrition literature. Additional reasons were included on the basis of their perceived importance by educators in the Pacific region.

Procedures

The R&D Cadre members and their local support teams coordinated the survey administration. They planned meetings to inform school staff about the RAPSTA study, its purpose, rationale for the selection of schools, and the importance of serious responses to the survey. In these meetings, schedules for data collection were developed and confirmed. Plans for necessary logistical support and accommodations were also communicated to the staff.

Members of the local R&D Cadre visited the selected schools and administered the surveys in group settings. All items on the form were read aloud to participants, whose identities were not required on the survey instruments.

The data were collected from April 1997 to June 1997, giving adequate time for personnel to complete the surveys and time for PREL staff to follow up on the status of returned surveys. Surveys were collected after being completed by each school's teachers and administrators. The local support team collected the completed surveys, then forwarded them to PREL in Honolulu for data entry and preliminary analysis.

III. Findings

This section features general findings on absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators in Chuuk State. It highlights findings in three areas: (1) reasons for school absences, (2) possible reasons for attrition within the education profession, and (3) comparisons of Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers.

Reasons for School Absences

During the 1996-1997 school year, teachers in Chuuk State were away from work, on average, for a total of 22.36 days. School administrators were away from work, on average, for a total of 42.43 days. Table 3 provides reasons why teachers were away from work and frequency of absence. Table 4 provides reasons why school administrators were away from work and frequency of absence.

Table 3

Reasons Why Teachers Are Away from School in Chuuk State

Rank	Reason	Average # of Days Away
1	Personal illness	4.93
2	Funerals	3.44
3	Family member sick	2.76
4	Administrative leave	1.47
5	Maternity leave	1.15
6	Storm, heavy rain, flood, etc.	1.00
7	Vacation	0.88
8	Family responsibilities	0.84
9	Child care	0.77
10	Meetings and workshops	0.73
11	Church activities	0.69
12	Other	0.66
13	Training leave	0.65
14	Transportation problem	0.61
15	Community responsibilities	0.57
16	Educational leave	0.23
17	Working conditions	0.22
18	Birthdays	0.19
18	Relationship with supervisors	0.19
19	Stress	0.11
20	Lack of instructional materials	0.07
20	Weddings	0.07
20	Jury duty	0.07
21	Paternity leave	0.05
22	Relationship with co-workers	0.01
23	Suspension	0.00
23	Military training	0.00
	TOTAL	**22.36**

In Chuuk State, personal illness was the leading cause of teacher absence from school, with an average of 4.93 days away. The next highest reason was funerals, with an average of 3.44 days; followed by sickness in the family, with an average of 2.76 days.

Table 4

Reasons Why School Administrators Are Away from School in Chuuk State

Rank	Reason	Average # of Days Away
1	Other	9.42
2	Meetings and workshops	5.66
3	Funerals	5.08
4	Personal illness	3.03
5	Family member sick	2.97
6	Storm, heavy rain, flood, etc.	1.97
7	Church activities	1.79
8	Administrative leave	1.71
9	Lack of instructional materials	1.61
10	Family responsibilities	1.55
11	Training leave	1.32
12	Working conditions	1.24
13	Vacation	1.18
14	Paternity leave	1.05
15	Community responsibilities	0.87
16	Stress	0.39
17	Child care	0.29
18	Relationship with supervisors	0.24
19	Transportation problem	0.21
19	Relationship with co-workers	0.21
19	Birthdays	0.21
20	Maternity leave	0.16
20	Educational leave	0.16
21	Weddings	0.11
22	Suspension	0.00
22	Military training	0.00
22	Jury duty	0.00
	TOTAL	**42.43**

Chuuk State school administrators were most frequently away from school due to "other" reasons, with an average of 9.42 days away. Survey respondents cited administrative tasks at the district office as "other" reasons. The next highest reasons were meetings and workshops, with an average of 5.66 days, and funerals, with an average of 5.08 days.

Reasons for Attrition in the Education Profession

Respondents rated 17 reasons for leaving teaching or administration on a four-point Likert-type scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

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In order to judge the technical significance of correlations between responses on each item, this ordinal scale was collapsed into two categories: "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were counted as DISAGREE; "strongly agree" and "agree" were counted as AGREE. Percentage of agreement was then calculated for each reason.

In Chuuk State, 17.74 percent (N=22) of the surveyed teachers agreed that they might leave teaching within the next two years. For purposes of analysis, two categories were created: Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers. Non-Leavers are those who disagreed with the statement, "I might leave teaching within the next two years." Table 5 ranks the reasons teachers gave for leaving teaching, comparing Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers.

No support from school administration, no support from central office, personal health problems, and low salaries are among the top reasons for leaving teaching in Chuuk State. These reasons were ranked among the top five by teachers who are planning to leave as well as by those who are not.

A statistical test (Chi^2) was performed to find out if the response patterns of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are different when looking at each possible reason for leaving teaching. Potential Leavers are more likely to leave for the following reasons: no support from school administration, too much stress, lack of control over school policies, and too many responsibilities.

In Chuuk State, 25 percent (N=10) of the surveyed school administrators agreed that they might leave educational administration within the next two years (Potential Leavers). Table 6 ranks the reasons school administrators gave for potentially leaving the school administration field, and compares Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers. Non-Leavers are those who disagreed with the statement, "I might leave educational administration altogether within the next two years."

The top reason for leaving school administration, retirement, is ranked number one by school administrators who are planning to leave as well as by those who are not. There are many other reasons why Potential Leavers might leave school administration, and these reasons differentiate them from Non-Leavers (see rankings in Table 6). A statistical test (Chi^2) was performed to determine if the response patterns of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are different for each possible reason for leaving school administration. Results of the test indicated that Potential Leavers were more likely to leave because of the following reasons: poor relationships with parents and poor relationships with teachers.

Table 5

Reasons for Leaving Teaching in Chuuk State

If I quit teaching, it would be because of . . .	Potential Leavers		Non-Leavers	
	% Agree	Rank	% Agree	Rank
poor working conditions	68.2	6	46.0	9
no support from school administration *	85.7	1	60.5	4
no support from central office	81.8	2	71.8	2
too much stress *	72.7	3	44.6	11
poor relationship with parents	36.4	12	33.3	14
students' bad attitudes	38.1	11	46.1	8
my lack of control over school policies *	47.6	10	22.7	17
poor benefits	70.0	5	52.8	7
personal health problems	71.4	4	60.3	5
too many disagreements about how to teach	23.8	13	35.2	13
not enough materials and supplies	63.6	8	57.3	6
low salaries	72.7	3	76.6	1
too many responsibilities *	52.4	9	28.4	15
pressure from the community	38.1	11	38.7	12
retirement	65.0	7	67.6	3
promotion	65.0	7	45.8	10
poor relationship with other teachers	19.1	14	23.0	16

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$

Table 6

Reasons for Leaving Administration in Chuuk State

If I quit being a school administrator, it would be because of ...	Potential Leavers		Non-Leavers	
	% Agree	Rank	% Agree	Rank
poor working conditions	62.5	5	36.0	11
no support from school staff	75.0	3	44.4	8
no support from central office administration	77.8	2	70.4	2
too much stress	55.6	6	30.8	13
poor relationships with parents **	75.0	3	22.2	16
students' bad attitudes	33.3	9	24.0	15
my lack of control over school policies	62.5	5	26.9	14
poor benefits	55.6	6	57.7	5
personal health problems	75.0	3	66.7	3
too many disagreements about how to run my school	66.7	4	38.5	10
not enough school materials and supplies	55.6	6	50.0	7
low salaries	77.8	2	63.0	4
too many responsibilities	44.4	8	42.3	9
pressure from the community	50.0	7	34.6	12
retirement	87.5	1	74.1	1
promotion	33.3	9	44.4	8
poor relationship with teachers **	66.7	4	18.5	17
poor relationship with staff	44.4	8	15.4	18
political reasons	44.4	8	51.9	6

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$

Comparison of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers

The relationship between stress, burnout, and reported desire to leave the education field was examined in order to provide assistance to program managers and staff developers who work to improve school climate.

1. A *high degree of burnout* is reflected in high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales, and in low scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

2. A *medium degree of burnout* is reflected in moderate scores on the three subscales.

3. A *low degree of burnout* is reflected in low scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales, and in high scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

Table 7 reflects a comparison of mean scores for all teacher and school administrator respondents, with scores from the norm sample. Chuuk State teachers and school administrators experience a lower sense of personal accomplishment than the norm sample. In addition, teachers are more emotionally exhausted than both school administrators and the norm sample. Both teachers and school administrators feel less depersonalized than the norm sample.

School administrators feel less emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than both teachers and the norm group. However, they also feel less personal accomplishment than the two groups.

Table 7

MBI Subscale Scores for Chuuk State Teachers and School Administrators Compared to the Norm Sample

MBI Subscale	Sample Size*	Mean Score
Personal Accomplishment (PA)		
Chuuk State Teachers	124	31.6
Chuuk State School Administrators	35	31.2
Norm Sample	4,163	33.5
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)		
Chuuk State Teachers	124	22.2
Chuuk State School Administrators	34	20.4
Norm Sample	4,163	21.3
Depersonalization (DP)		
Chuuk State Teachers	124	8.2
Chuuk State School Administrators	32	8.9
Norm Sample	4,163	11.0

*Sample sizes vary due to non-responses.

In order to analyze how Potential Leavers compare to Non-Leavers on the MBI subscales, scores were classified into High, Moderate, and Low categories. To make interpretation easier, the suggested cut-off scores used by MBI authors to classify low and high Personal Accomplishment were reversed. That is, a high score in this report means a high sense of personal accomplishment. According to the authors (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), personal accomplishment is a reverse scale, which means high scores denote a high *lack* of personal accomplishment. We found this to be confusing and, thus, made these changes for our reporting purposes. The following cut-off scores were used:

Table 8
Cut-Off Scores for MBI Subscale Categories

MBI Subscale	High	Moderate	Low
Personal Accomplishment	≥ 37	31-36	≤ 30
Emotional Exhaustion	≥ 27	17-26	≤ 16
Depersonalization	≥ 14	9-13	≤ 8

Figures 1-6 display differences between Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers among teachers (Figures 1-3) and school administrators (Figures 4-6) on the three MBI subscales. Among Chuuk State teachers who might leave, most display either high or low levels of personal accomplishment. They also feel more emotionally exhausted and more depersonalized than Non-Leavers. School administrators who might leave show a lower level of personal accomplishment, are less emotionally exhausted, and feel more depersonalized than their non-leaving peers.

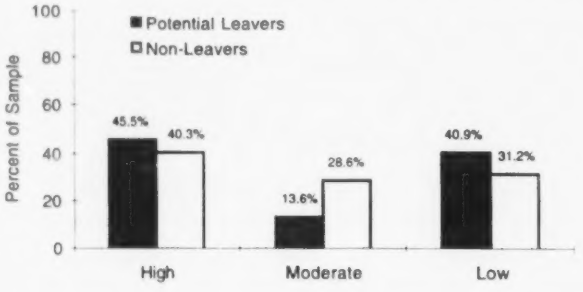

Figure 1. **Personal accomplishment among teachers in Chuuk**

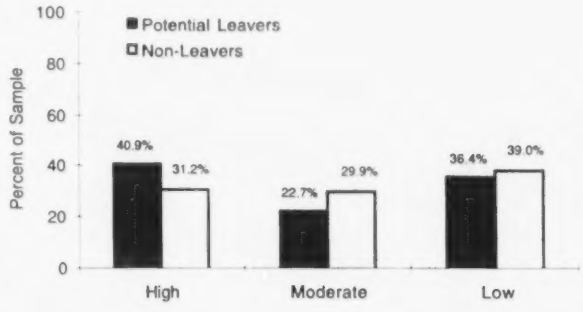

Figure 2. **Emotional exhaustion among teachers in Chuuk State**

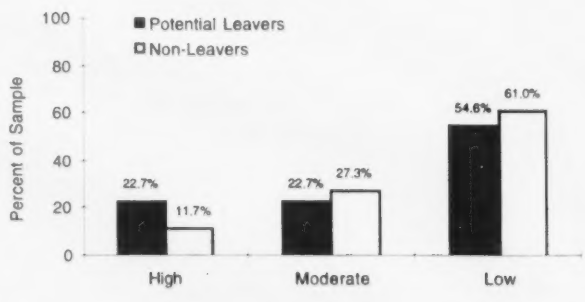

Figure 3. **Depersonalization among teachers in Chuuk State**

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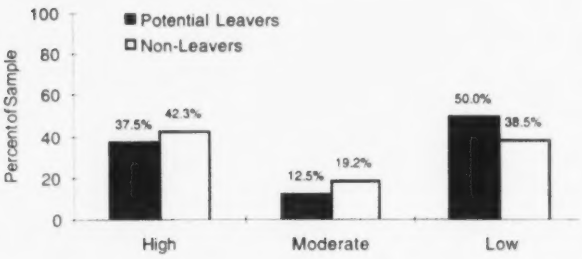

Figure 4. **Personal accomplishment among school administrators in Chuuk State**

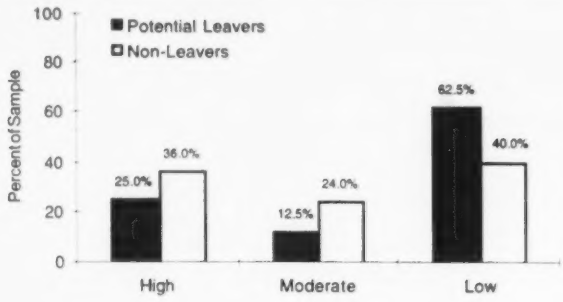

Figure 5. **Emotional exhaustion among school administrators in Chuuk State**

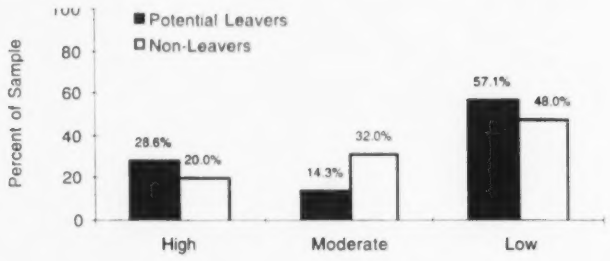

Figure 6. **Depersonalization among school administrators in Chuuk State**

IV. Discussion

Absenteeism

Absenteeism among teachers and school administrators in Chuuk State appears to be a problem. For example, teachers are away from work an average of 22.36 days. School administrators are away from work an average of 42.43 days. These numbers are the highest across all of PREL's entities in the Pacific region.

Teacher absences are due primarily to personal illness, funerals, and sick family members, reasons that tend to be of immediate concern to teachers (Scott & Wimbush, 1991). The number of days away due to personal illness (4.93) is also the highest reported by any entity. It was suggested that some of the reported personal illnesses may be the result of heavy drinking the previous day, and teachers do not report to work due to a hangover, a condition commonly referred to as "Monday sickness." In addition, funerals are culturally sanctioned occasions that often require participation in events that may take place during school hours.

School administrator absences are most often due to administrative tasks at the central office ("other" reasons), averaging 9.42 days away; meetings and workshops, 5.66 days; and funerals, 5.08 days. These professional obligations are not under the direct control of school administrators but require their attention. Administrative tasks cited include dropping off time sheets and picking up pay checks.

.Field observations made by the Chuuk State local support team members indicated that in many cases, completed surveys were not returned because educators "simply were not around when the schools

were visited." During the course of a week, the team returned to many schools on neighboring islands, but educators at these schools were gone for extended periods of time. Thus, findings on absenteeism reported in the data may appear lower than they actually are. This is unfortunate, as the number of days away from school by Chuuk State educators is already reported to be extremely high.

Attrition

Eighteen percent of teachers agreed with the statement, "I plan to leave teaching within the next two years." The top reasons selected for leaving were lack of support from school administration and low salaries, both ranked among the top five by teachers who were planning to leave as well as by those who were not. Potential Leavers are more likely to leave for the following reasons: no support from school administration, too much stress, lack of control over school policies, and too many responsibilities. It was suggested by some Chuukese educators that in instances where the relationship between principal and teacher is strained, the working environment may be difficult for the teacher. Furthermore, because of difficulties accessing remote islands, central office responses to requests for supplies and materials may be delayed, thus causing more frustration. Although many teachers are nearing retirement age, retirement was not a reason cited for leaving teaching within the next two years.

Low salaries have been a problem for several years. Teachers often leave Chuuk in order to teach in places that offer higher salaries, such as Guam and the CNMI, or they leave teaching altogether for a higher-paying position in another department.

Among school administrators, both Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are likely to cite retirement as a reason for leaving the public school system. Among the 25 percent of school administrators who may leave within the next two years, retirement was the top reason cited for leaving. It was also ranked number one by those who are not leaving. As most of the Chuuk State school administrators in this study are over the age of 45 and have more than twenty years of experience, many are approaching retirement.

There are also other reasons why Potential Leavers might leave school administration, including poor relationships with parents and teachers. Among the ten entities, this finding was unique to Chuuk State administrators and might warrant further investigation.

Burnout

Approximately 18 percent of Chuuk State teachers might leave within the next two years; most of them report either a high or low sense of personal accomplishment, but more emotional exhaustion and more depersonalization at work than those who plan to stay. Many of the teachers who might leave teaching in Chuuk State appear to experience some aspects of occupational burnout.

Twenty-five percent of Chuuk State school administrators might leave within the next two years; they experience a lower sense of personal accomplishment and feel more depersonalized, but are less emotionally exhausted. Thus, school administrators who might leave also experience some aspects of occupational burnout.

The common reasons given for leaving teaching or school administration are lack of support (either from school administration or central office) and low salaries. Teachers also cited too much stress, and school administrators mentioned retirement as a top reason for leaving. Even though teachers might feel that they are putting forth their best efforts, which might account for those who have a high level of personal accomplishment, low salaries and lack of support cause frustration and resentment. This might then lead to occupational burnout.

V. Limitations

The Challenge of Language and Culture

Conducting research across diverse linguistic and cultural groups is a challenging task. The language in which research is conducted can limit accurate interpretation of results. Expectations regarding task importance and response candor may vary from culture to culture. Thus, results from cross-cultural studies may be difficult to interpret.

While English is the language of wider communication in all of the American-affiliated Pacific entities, respondents to the surveys in this study varied in their use and comprehension of English. For some, English might be a first language; for others, it might be a second or third language, used to a much lesser extent than the vernacular. Thus, particular vocabulary, grammatical structures, or instructions may have been problematic.

To adjust for some for these potential errors in measurement, native language/culture informants, who are members of the R&D Cadre or entity local support teams, provided the following expert assistance:

- developed and piloted questions used in the survey;
- revised potentially confusing items from the Maslach instrument;
- in many cases, administered surveys in group settings, leading respondents through each item, and clarifying meanings upon request; and
- provided translations, where necessary, especially in geographically isolated outer-island settings.

Culture-specific interpretations concerning the importance of research, ways of responding, and the meanings of specific terms might all affect results. R&D Cadre members made special efforts to work with their respective departments or ministries of education and directors to ensure that teachers and school administrators took their responses to the survey seriously. In many cases, entity-wide meetings were held to explain the study, its importance, and the need for truthful data. Because the study was designed by members of each department of education, and was intended to investigate issues of importance to the entity, some support was ensured. The study was discussed at principals' and teachers' meetings; support for administration and data collection was provided by the entity department or ministry of education.

Instrumentation

All data collected in this study came from self-report questionnaires. This method of data collection was selected because of its perceived advantages for large-scale research. Those advantages include:

- Questionnaires are relatively easy and inexpensive to administer
- Questionnaires can be designed to ensure anonymity
- Respondents answer at their own pace
- Questions are standardized

However, self-report questionnaires also have limitations—responses may not always be truthful or accurate. Some respondents might make careless errors, such as checking the wrong box or writing the incorrect number. They might purposely answer questions with incorrect information because they want to give a favorable impression or avoid potentially embarrassing admissions. Or, they might misinterpret questions and respond inaccurately.

The R&D Cadre pilot-tested the questionnaires in order to improve wording so that respondents might better interpret the meanings of questions. Additionally, directions for completing the questionnaires and administration procedures were purposefully designed to ensure anonymity. However, even with these precautions, hindsight tells us that specif-

ic changes might have improved the validity of responses. In particular, the following limitations are noted:

1. Items that required respondents to check boxes on the right were somewhat confusing. The items should have been transposed so that the boxes were on the left.
2. Questions measuring attrition could have been phrased with greater clarity. Rather than asking if the respondents *might* leave and reasons that *might* cause them to leave, perhaps asking whether or not they were going to leave and *why* would have provided more definitive information.
3. In order to assure respondents of anonymity and foster truthfulness in responses, surveys did not ask for individuals' names. However, they did request the names of schools. In entities where there are few schools and a limited number of teachers (e.g., one per grade level), this may not have been sufficient to guarantee anonymity, and, consequently, honesty in response.

Analysis

Non-responses to items on the questionnaires could limit the validity of some results. For example, in order to analyze differences between teachers who are Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers, only those who responded to the question "I might leave teaching within the next two years" and each of the reasons for leaving could be included in the analyses (cross-tabulations). In some instances, large portions of the sample did not respond to either the "I might leave" question or one of the reasons.

Therefore, conclusions based on such results may only be generalized on the basis of those who were willing to respond. There may be systematic differences between respondents and non-respondents. For example, if non-respondents were more likely to experience depersonalization at work and, therefore, did not care to respond to all items, then conclusions based on results in which they did not participate would under-identify this risk factor in the population.

Although standardized group administration practices included requests to respond to all items, these requests were not sufficient. Moreover, standardized administration was not always possible.

Non-responses on the Maslach Burnout Inventory were also a problem. In order to calculate each subscale score, all items that contributed to that subscale must have been answered. If a respondent left one item out, the subscale in which that item was included could not be computed. Therefore, the extent of burnout may be underrepresented.

VI. Recommendations

The recommendations provided in this section of the report are based on the general findings concerned with absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators in Chuuk State. Findings in three areas are highlighted: (1) reasons for absences, (2) possible reasons for attrition in the education profession, and (3) comparisons of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Absenteeism

Absenteeism among teachers and school administrators in Chuuk State appears to be a problem. Teachers are away from work, on average, a total of 22.36 days. School administrators are away from work, on average, a total of 42.43 days. These numbers are the highest in all the entities. Although some absences might have occurred for valid reasons, the very high rates of absenteeism for both teachers and school administrators are problematic. This condi-

tion is even more acute in light of data-collection visits by the Chuuk State local support team, who found that many educators were not at school during the time periods when surveys were distributed and collected. The difficulties associated with these high rates of absenteeism are compounded by the fact that no substitute teachers or administrators are available in Chuuk.

It is therefore recommended that the need to improve the school attendance of Chuuk State educators be seriously considered. Existing attendance policies should be reviewed for appropriate action. In the absence of current attendance policies, written policies should be developed and consistently implemented through an appropriate accountability system that includes sanctions and rewards. For children to make academic progress, they need guidance and leadership from their teachers and school administrators; these educators provide necessary and important instruction, both verbally and by example.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Attrition

In Chuuk State, there are numerous reasons for teachers to leave the teaching field: no support from school administration, too much stress, lack of control over school policies, and too many responsibilities. For school administrators, Potential Leavers are more likely to leave because of poor relationships with parents and teachers. This finding is unique to Chuuk State administrators and might warrant further study.

To contribute to staff stability, a pro-active program aimed at reducing the attrition rate of teachers and school administrators should be designed and implemented by the public school system. Staff stability, in turn, might contribute to better student performance and achievement.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Stress/Burnout

In Chuuk State, teachers who might leave within the next two years reported more emotional exhaustion and depersonalization at work. Some also experience low levels of personal accomplishment. School administrators who might leave experience a lower sense of personal accomplishment and a higher feeling of depersonalization. These findings reflect some aspects of occupational burnout; therefore, it is recommended that a comprehensive program to reduce stress and burnout among educators in the Chuuk State public school system should be designed and implemented. Such a program could contribute to improved attendance and the well-being of those who work most closely with students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: RAPSTA Teacher Questionnaire

Appendix B: RAPSTA School Administrator Questionnaire

Appendix A

Retention and Attrition of
Pacific School Teachers and Administrators
(RAPSTA) Study

Teacher Questionnaire

Created by the

Research and Development Cadre

American Samoa Department of Education
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System
Federated States of Micronesia National Department of Education
Guam Department of Education
Chuuk State Department of Education
Hawai'i State Department of Education
Kosrae State Department of Education
Pohnpei State Department of Education
Yap State Department of Education
Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education
Republic of Palau Ministry of Education
with the assistance of
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

PREL

Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators (RAPSTA) Study
Teacher Questionnaire

SECTION 1

The purpose of this section is to understand what factors cause teachers to be away from school. All responses will be kept anonymous. Please complete this section by filling in the requested information. Please print your responses and check (✓) boxes () as appropriate. Remember, DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. It is important that all responses be anonymous.

School: _____ **Date**: _____

Location: Am. Samoa Guam CNMI Hawai'i RMI
Pohnpei Chuuk Kosrae Yap Palau

Gender: M F **Place of birth:** _____
(Entity or State or Country)

Ethnic heritage: _____
(Ethnicity of Parents)

Age:
15-19 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-39 40-44
45-49 50-54 55-59 60-64 65 +

Current marital status:
Never Married Married Separated Divorced Widowed

Highest level of education attained:
High School Graduate Associate Degree Bachelor Degree
Master Degree Other (specify)

Major field of study: _____
(Examples: Elementary Education, Math, Science, Agriculture, etc.)

Current annual salary: $_____(per year)

Years of teaching experience:
1 - 4 5 - 10 11 - 14 15 - 20 21 or more

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
What grades do you currently teach? (check all that apply)													
How many students do you teach? (put in number per grade level)													

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For elementary teachers who teach in self-contained settings, please check the subject areas you are currently teaching.

✓	Subject areas you teach (put a ✓ in column on left)	✓	Subject areas you teach (put a ✓ in column on left)
	Language Arts/English		Art
	Language Arts/Vernacular		Music
	Math		Health
	Science		Physical Education
	Social Studies		Guidance
	Other (specify)		Other (specify)

For secondary teachers who teach in departmentalized settings, please check the subject area(s) and number of class periods you are currently teaching.

	Number of class periods you teach (put a ✓ in the appropriate columns)						
Subject area(s) you teach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Language Arts/English							
Language Arts/Vernacular							
Math							
Science							
Social Studies							
Vocational Education (specify)							
Business Education							
Computers							
Art							
Music							
Physical Education							
Other (specify)							

If you have had jobs other than teaching, please list them below.

Previous employment other than teaching	Number of years

Total number of instructional days you were away from school this year (SY '96 -'97):

None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20 +

Write the number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97 for the reasons listed below.

Reason	Number of Days	Reason	Number of Days
funerals		working conditions	
birthdays		relationship with co-workers	
child care		stress	
transportation problem		meetings and workshops	
personal illness		administrative leave	
family member sick		educational leave	
family responsibilities (errands)		training leave	
community responsibilities		church activities	
storm, heavy rain or flood		maternity leave	
vacation		paternity leave	
lack of instructional materials		suspension	
relationship with supervisor		jury duty	
wedding		military training	
other (specify)		other (specify)	

SECTION 2

This section of the questionnaire contained directions and 22 items intended to measure teachers' stress and burnout. This section was modified and reproduced by special permission of the Publisher, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA 94303 from ***Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey*** *by Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson, & Richard L. Schwab. Copyright 1986 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Permission for reproduction of the instrument in this report was not granted.*

SECTION 3

The purpose of this section is to understand what makes teachers leave their jobs. Below are listed statements made about quitting a teaching job. Place a check (✓) in the column next to each statement that best reflects how much *you agree or disagree* with the statement. Please respond to all statements.

MAKE ONE ✓ MARK ON EACH LINE.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I might leave my current teaching job for a better teaching position within the next two years.				
I might leave teaching all together within the next two years.				
If I quit teaching, it would be because of . . .				
poor working conditions.				
no support from school administration.				
no support from central office administration.				
too much stress.				
poor relationships with parents.				
students' bad attitudes.				
my lack of control over school policies.				
poor benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.).				
personal health problems.				
too many disagreements about how to teach.				
not enough school materials and supplies.				
low salaries.				
too many responsibilities.				
pressure from the community.				
retirement.				
promotion.				
poor relationship with other teachers.				

Thank you for your assistance. Please return this questionnaire to the large envelope which has been placed on one of the desks in the room.

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Appendix B

Retention and Attrition of
Pacific School Teachers and Administrators
(RAPSTA) Study

School Administrator Questionnaire

Created by the

Research and Development Cadre

American Samoa Department of Education
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System
Federated States of Micronesia National Department of Education
Guam Department of Education
Chuuk State Department of Education
Hawai'i State Department of Education
Kosrae State Department of Education
Pohnpei State Department of Education
Yap State Department of Education
Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education
Republic of Palau Ministry of Education
with the assistance of
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

PREL

Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators (RAPSTA) Study
School Administrator Questionnaire

SECTION 1

The purpose of this section is to understand what factors cause school administrators to be away from school. All responses will be kept anonymous. Please complete this section by filling in the requested information. Please print your responses and check (✓) boxes () as appropriate. Remember, DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONAIRE. It is important that all responses be anonymous.

Date: _____

Location: Am. Samoa Guam CNMI Hawai`i RMI
Pohnpei Chuuk Kosrae Yap Palau

Gender: M F **Place of birth:** _____
(Entity or State or Country)

Ethnic heritage: _____
(Ethnicity of Parents)

Age:
15-19 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-39 40-44
45-49 50-54 55-59 60-64 65 +

Current marital status:
Never Married Married Separated Divorced Widowed

Highest level of education attained:
High School Graduate Associate Degree Bachelor Degree
Master Degree Other (specify)

Major field(s) of study: _____
(Examples: School Administration, Curriculum & Instruction, Elementary Education, Math, etc.)

Current annual salary: $_____(per year)

Total school enrollment: _____

Students enrolled by grade:
What is the student enrollment at your school by grade?

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Your current position:
principal vice-principal head teacher
teaching principal teaching vice-principal

In the space below, please describe your training in school administration.

Please indicate the number of years of teaching and administrative experience you have had.

	Number of years by level		
	Elem./Int. (K-8)	High Sch. (9-12)	College
teacher			
head teacher			
teaching department head			
teaching vice-principal			
vice-principal			
teaching principal			
principal			

If you are a teaching principal/teaching vice-principal, please check the subject area(s) and number of class periods you are currently teaching.

	Number of class periods you teach (put a ✓ in the appropriate columns)						
Subject area(s) you teach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Language Arts/English							
Language Arts/Vernacular							
Math							
Science							
Social Studies							
Vocational Education (specify)							
Business Education							
Computers							
Art							
Music							
Physical Education							
Other (specify)							

If you have had jobs other than teaching and/or school administration, please list them below.

Previous employment other than teaching or school administration	Number of years

Total number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97:

None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20 +

Write the number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97 for the reasons listed below.

Reason	Number of Days	Reason	Number of Days
funerals		working conditions	
birthdays		relationship with co-workers	
child care		stress	
transportation problem		meetings and workshops	
personal illness		administrative leave	
family member sick		educational leave	
family responsibilities (errands)		training leave	
community responsibilities		church activities	
storm, heavy rain or flood		maternity leave	
vacation		paternity leave	
lack of instructional materials		suspension	
relationship with supervisor		jury duty	
wedding		military training	
other (specify)		other (specify)	

SECTION 2

This section of the questionnaire contained directions and 22 items intended to measure school administrators' stress and burnout. This section was modified and reproduced by special permission of the Publisher, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA 94303 from ***Maslach Burnout Inventory–Human Services Survey*** *by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson. Copyright 1986 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Permission for reproduction of the instrument in this report was not granted.*

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SECTION 3

The purpose of this section is to understand what makes school administrators leave their jobs. Below are listed statements made about quitting a school administrator's job. Place a check (✓) in the column next to each statement that best reflects how much *you agree or disagree* with the statement.

MAKE ONE ✓ MARK ON EACH LINE.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I might leave my current school administrator position for a better school administrator position within the next two years.				
I might leave my current school administrator position for a better central office administrator position within the next two years.				
I might leave educational administration all together within the next two years.				

If I quit being a school administrator, it would be because of . . .

poor working conditions.	
no support from school staff.	
no support from central office administration.	
too much stress.	
poor relationships with parents.	
students' bad attitudes.	
my lack of control over school policies.	
poor benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.).	
personal health problems.	
too many disagreements about how to run my school.	
not enough school materials and supplies.	
low salaries.	
too many responsibilities.	
pressure from the community.	
retirement.	
promotion.	
poor relationship with teachers.	
poor relationship with staff.	
political reasons.	

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